

1850. Jefferson Davis, on January 29, 1850, said upon that compromise:

"That I may be understood on this question, and that my position may go forth to the country in the same columns that convey the sentiments of the Senator from Kentucky, I here assert that *never will I take less than the Missouri Compromise line extended to the Pacific Ocean, with a specific recognition of the right to hold slaves in the Territories below that line*; and that, before such Territories are admitted into the Union as States, slaves may be taken there from any of the United States at the option of their owners."

To which Henry Clay replied:

"I am extremely sorry to hear the Senator from Mississippi say that he requires, first, the extension of the Missouri Compromise line to the Pacific; and also that he is not satisfied with that, but requires, if I understand him correctly, a positive provision for the admission of slavery south of that line. And now, sir, coming from a slave State as I do, I owe it to myself, I owe it to truth, I owe it to the subject, to state that no earthly power could induce me to vote for a specific measure for the introduction of slavery where it had not before existed, either south or north of that line. Coming as I do from a slave State, it is my solemn, deliberate, and well-matured determination that no power—no earthly power—shall compel me to vote for the positive introduction of slavery either south or north of that line. Sir, while you reproach—and justly, too—our British ancestors for the introduction of this institution upon the continent of America, I am, for one, unwilling that the posterity of the present inhabitants of California and New Mexico shall reproach us for doing just what we reproach Great Britain for doing to us."

This shows the position of the two great leaders at that time. Henry Clay, were he to utter these sentiments to day, would be called an abolitionist. In fact, he would be an abolitionist with the rest of us, were he now living.

From that period the vexed question has been before the people, politically as well as morally and religiously, and out of it directly and as a sequence of its agitation, arose this war. There was no possible way of satisfying the South but by giving up the whole point at issue. They had educated themselves into the belief that a trifling show of fight on their part would secure to them the power they demanded, the power to curse with their iniquity every foot of virgin soil over which the standard of the nation waved, the guaranty of *protection* to all peoples; they fired upon that flag, and they or their empire will perish beneath its folds.

And now, sir, in view of the above hastily suggested considerations, and in view of the more elaborate and more able presentations of the question by others on this floor, and

in view of the thorough canvass of the whole subject before the people of the State, I for one am ready to declare, that "hereafter in this State there shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except in punishment of crime, whereof the party shall have been duly convicted; and all persons held to service or labor as slaves are hereby declared free."

It is a favorite mode of the gentlemen opposing the adoption of this article, to quote incessantly words spoken by men now living, never mentioning the circumstance that their words now might be far different from those uttered even a year or two ago.

If they would appeal to our reason at all on behalf of the position they assume, they ought, at least out of respect or courtesy, to pay some attention to the fact that we are in the midst of an awful crisis: that the fate of our country depends upon the arbitrament of battle; that as the chances of war vary, we are necessarily obliged to change our views. It seems so useless to go into an argument to show why this is necessary, that I can scarcely notice it with patience. However, I will say this much: At the outset of this war, before the war commenced; in fact, from the formation of our Government—(have the gentlemen forgotten?)—it has been the desire, the earnest effort of all Union loving citizens to yield up to the slaveholders almost all that they demanded, until further concession would have been equivalent to infamy.

So it was, that in 1861 and 1862, resolutions were passed such as have been quoted. But they would listen to no terms but their own. Does not the gentleman remember who it was that defeated the Crittenden resolutions in the Senate? It was the slaveholders, by dodging the vote, that defeated the resolutions, and they fully intended that it should be so.

Another argument is that it is detrimental to the material interests of the State; and very many comparisons have been made. There is one point which has been altogether overlooked. When the gentleman referred to New Hampshire and Vermont, he forgot to mention that there were other reasons why these States did not prosper as well as some others. Let me take a case with which I am very familiar—the case of Old Virginia, right across our border—and Ohio. They are contiguous States, containing nearly the same amount of territory; and what is the statement? Ohio was settled in 1788 by 47 persons from Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut. Two years after, it contained 3,000 inhabitants. Thus they started in the race. The population of Virginia in 1790, I cannot find; but in 1800, Ohio contained 45,365 inhabitants, and Virginia 880,200. In 1820, Ohio contained 937,637, and Virginia 1,211,405. In 1860, Virginia had 1,596,318, Ohio